

IN THE CLAIMS:

Replace claims 24 and 26 as originally filed with amended claims 24 and 26.

24. (Amended) An improved desalination process which comprises:

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A1 (a) blending a first stream of softened salt water having a substantially reduced concentration of hardness ions with a second stream of untreated salt water containing a high concentration of hardness ions to form a feed to a desalination system, and

A1 (b) passing the feed through the desalination system to form a water product of potable quality, wherein the improvement comprises the introduction of a feed of variable proportions of softened and untreated salt water to the desalination system to increase the top operating temperature of the system and increase recovery of potable water.

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A2 26. (Amended) The desalination process of claim 24, wherein the stream of softened salt water is brine containing water produced by the desalination system, and wherein the brine containing water is selected from the group consisting of reject, blowdown, distillate, and recycled brine.